

Erie Canal (Enlarged), Upper Mohawk River Aqueduct
(Rexford Aqueduct)
Originally spanning Mohawk River adjacent to
New York Highway 146 (Ball Town Road)
From Rexford
Saratoga County
To Niskayuna
Schenectady County
New York

HAER No. NY-12

HAER
NY,
46-REXFO,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ERIE CANAL (ENLARGED), UPPER MOHAWK RIVER AQUEDUCT (REXFORD AQUEDUCT)
HAER No. NY-12

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NY,
46-REXFO,
1-

Location: Originally spanning Mohawk River adjacent to
New York Highway 146 (Ball Town Road)
From Rexford, Saratoga County to Niskayuna,
Schenectady County, New York
Latitude: 42° 47' 44.5" N. Longitude: 73° 53' 00" W.

Date of Erection: 1842

Present Owner: State of New York

Present Use: Historic site

Significance: Remains of one of the two aqueducts built to carry
the Enlarged Erie Canal over the Mohawk River.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: New York State continuous ownership.
2. Original purpose and construction: One of the major aqueducts of the Enlarged Erie Canal, the Upper Mohawk River Aqueduct replaced the original 1828 Rexford aqueduct* and was one of the two crossing the river. Twelve miles downstream at Crescent, the canal again traversed the river, this time north to south, by means of the Lower Mohawk River Aqueduct. Both aqueducts were completed in 1842.
3. Alterations: Continuing in operation until the new State Barge Canal System opened in 1916, a major portion of the aqueduct was removed in 1918; nothing remains of the Crescent Aqueduct. All the stones removed from the Rexford Aqueduct are available for use if it is ever to be restored.

*In order to avoid steep, rocky terrain, Canvass White, C.E., devised the plan, approved in 1821, for the canal route to cross and re-cross the Mohawk River at Alexander's Mills (adjacent to Rexford) and at Fonda's Ferry (near Crescent).

B. Sources of Information

1. Unpublished sources:

Hutchinson, Holmes. MS vol. 10, (Plate 21), Map of the Erie Canal. Albany: 6 September 1834. New York State Library, Manuscript and History Section, Albany.

2. Published sources:

New York State Historic Trust. Historic Sites of New York State. (pamphlet) Albany, n.d. (c. 1968).

Papp, John. Erie Canal Days: A Pictorial Essay. Schenectady, 1967.

Shaw, Ronald E. Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal 1792-1854. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966.

Whitford, Noble E. History of the Canal System of the State of New York. Vol. 1, Albany: Brandow Printing Company, 1906. (Under the authority of the New York State Engineer and Surveyor).

Prepared by R. Carole Huberman
Architectural Historian
September 1970

PART II. ENGINEERING INFORMATION

A. General statement

1. Structural character: The remaining abutments, piers, and arches of an Erie Canal aqueduct; the end sections not removed during the building of the present State Barge Canal which involved the canalization of the Mohawk in this area.

2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Detailed Description

1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 160' by 86' on south side (structure not measured).

2. Number of bays: 2 arches and 3 piers remain on each side (originally 13 arches and 14 piers).

3. Sub- and superstructure: Random ashlar masonry, probably limestone.
4. Structural system: Masonry arches spanning approximately 45' to support towpath; masonry piers approximately 45' wide to support original timber canal trunk.

C. Site

1. Orientation: North (east) to south (west); approximately 10° NNE.
2. Setting: The aqueduct remains exist on either side of the river.

Prepared by Richard J. Pollak
Professor of Architecture
Ball State University
18 June 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the Mohawk-Hudson Area Survey, a pilot study for the Historic American Engineering Record which was established in 1969 under the aegis of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The project was sponsored jointly by the National Park Service (Historic American Buildings Survey), the Smithsonian Institution (National Museum of History and Technology), the American Society of Civil Engineers (National Headquarters and Mohawk-Hudson Section), and the New York State Historic Trust. The field work and historical research were conducted under the general direction of Robert M. Vogel, Curator of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Smithsonian Institution; James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey; and Richard J. Pollak, Professor of Architecture, Ball State University, Project Supervisor; and with the cooperation of the Department of Architecture, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.